

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ROME 005355

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TAGS: PREL PHUM CU PHUM CU IT ITPREL HUMAN RIGHTS

SUBJECT: GOI COMMITTED TO BUT PESSIMISTIC ABOUT EU-CUBA DIALOGUE

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1B. SECSTATE 185884

1C. ROME 2524

1D. ROME 1649

CLASSIFIED BY: POLMINCOUNS T. COUNTRYMAN FOR REASONS 1.5(B) AND (D)

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11. (C) SUMMARY: IN RESPONSE TO A HUMAN RIGHTS UPDATE, MFA OFFICE DIRECTOR FOR CENTRAL AMERICAN AND CARIBBEAN AFFAIRS NICOLO' GORETTI SHARED INFORMATION ON HOW THE GOI AND OTHER EU MEMBERS VIEWED CUBA AND THE EU DIALOGUE WITH IT. HE LOCATED ITALY IN A "PRO-ENGAGEMENT" GROUP ALONG WITH OTHER "LATIN" MEMBERS. SIMILARLY, HE SUPPORTED CONTINUED DIALOGUE EVEN THOUGH THE TALKS HAD PRODUCED LITTLE AND WERE UNLIKELY TO ACCOMPLISH MUCH IN THE FUTURE. FINALLY, GORETTI TOUCHED ON TRADE ISSUES AND PREVIEWED DIPLOMATIC AND HUMANITARIAN SUBJECTS LIKELY TO BE RAISED AT THE NOVEMBER 4 EU-CUBA MEETING. END SUMMARY.

12. (SBU) ON OCTOBER 25 AT THE MFA, POLOFF DELIVERED REF B DEMARCHE ON HUMAN RIGHTS IN CUBA TO OFFICE DIRECTOR FOR CENTRAL AMERICAN AND CARIBBEAN AFFAIRS NICOLO' GORETTI DE FLAMINI. GORETTI SET THE TONE FOR REMARKS THAT SEEMED CONTRADICTORY BY OPENING A HALF-HOUR DISCOURSE WITH THE COMMENT, "I HAVE NOTHING TO SAY. I COMPLETELY AGREE." HE CONCURRED THAT THE HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION IS WORSENING WITH, FOR EXAMPLE, THE HARASSMENT OF THE PROJECT VARELA ORGANIZERS. GORETTI WAS FAMILIAR WITH ALL OF THE CASES DESCRIBED IN THE NON-PAPER AND HAD EVEN RECEIVED A COPY OF THE DEMARCHE THAT AMEMB PARIS HAD DELIVERED. HE PROMISED TO PASS THE NON-PAPER TO THE EU PRESIDENCY FOR THE UPCOMING MEETING AND NOTED THAT THE DANISH PRESIDENCY WAS VERY WELL INFORMED BECAUSE, HE BELIEVED, IT HAD AN AMBASSADOR IN HAVANA.

13. (C) AS NOTED IN REFS C AND D, GORETTI HAD CONCERNs ABOUT HOW TO SUPPORT PROJECT VARELA. NOTING THAT THE GOI AGREES WITH VARELA, HE SUGGESTED THAT THE USG NOT "PUSH TOO MUCH," WHICH COULD DISCREDIT LOCAL ACTIVISTS. CASTRO'S CLAIM

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THAT THE BUSH ADMINISTRATION WAS THE REAL FORCE BEHIND VARELA WAS INCORRECT BUT AN EASY CRITICISM. INSTEAD, THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY SHOULD FINESSE ITS SUPPORT. FOR EXAMPLE, FORMER PRESIDENT CARTER COULD MORE CREDIBLY PUSH THE INITIATIVE THAN THE USG. NOTING THAT THE EU HAD MADE A STATEMENT IN FAVOR OF IT, GORETTI CALLED VARELA A "USEFUL, DEMOCRATIC INITIATIVE" THAT UNFORTUNATELY HAS NOT BEEN APPRECIATED BY THE GOC.

14. (C) ADDRESSING THE EU-CUBA DIALOGUE, GORETTI SAID, "PERSONALLY I DON'T THINK IT WILL BE VERY SUCCESSFUL." THE DIALOGUE HAD "BEEN WITHOUT CONTENT SINCE DECEMBER ... NOT VERY FRUITFUL OR ADVANCING." NONETHELESS, HE ASSERTED, IT WAS "GOOD" OR "WORTH A TRY" TO CONTINUE.

15. (C) GORETTI DESCRIBED THE EU MEMBERS AS FALLING INTO THREE CAMPS: THE UK, WHICH WAS ABSOLUTELY OPPOSED TO DIALOGUE; SWEDEN, HOLLAND, AND DENMARK, WHICH THOUGHT DIALOGUE WAS HOPELESS AND INAPPROPRIATE BECAUSE OF HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES; AND A "LATIN" GROUP OF ITALY, FRANCE, BELGIUM, AND TO A CERTAIN EXTENT SPAIN AND PORTUGAL, WHICH FAVORED DIALOGUE WITH CUBA IN ORDER TO PUSH FOR HUMAN RIGHTS AND ENCOURAGE A FUTURE ECONOMIC OPENING.

16. (C) FOR ITS PART, THE GOC FAVORED CONTINUING DIALOGUE WITH THE EU, NOTING THAT IT HAD GOOD BILATERAL RELATIONS WITH EUROPEAN COUNTRIES BUT A POOR RELATIONSHIP WITH THE EU. FURTHERMORE, IT WANTED TO JOIN THE AFRICAN, CARIBBEAN, PACIFIC (ACP) INITIATIVE ESTABLISHED BY THE COTONOU AGREEMENT. THE LATIN GROUP HAD HELPED CUBA OBTAIN OBSERVER STATUS AT THE OPENING SESSION OF EU-ACP TRADE NEGOTIATIONS

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REDUCING TARIFFS, AS A WAY OF PREPARING IT FOR A POST-CASTRO ERA. CUBA NEEDED TO BE EDUCATED ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF COMPLYING WITH INTERNATIONAL REGULATIONS INSTEAD OF BEING ISOLATED. (AS AN EXAMPLE OF THIS, GORETTI CITED CUBA'S REFUSAL TO ACCEPT INTERNATIONAL RULES IN THE PARIS CLUB WITH REGARD TO THE DEBT IT OWES RUSSIA.) TO BECOME A MEMBER, HOWEVER, THE GOC WOULD HAVE TO IMPLEMENT THE COTONOU CRITERIA

AND SUBMIT AN APPLICATION. THE GOI DOUBTS CUBA COULD EVER QUALIFY UNDER CASTRO.

17. (C) GORETTI PREVIEWED THREE OTHER ISSUES LIKELY TO COME UP NOVEMBER 4: RENEWAL OF THE EU COMMON POSITION, A POTENTIAL UNHRC RESOLUTION, AND CUBA'S NEED FOR HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE. THE CUBANS WOULD UNDOUBTEDLY ASK FOR THE DECEMBER NON-RENEWAL OF THE "TOUGH" EUROPEAN COMMON POSITION THAT CALLS FOR CUBAN DEMOCRATIZATION. IN A DIPLOMATIC DANCE WHOSE ENDING IS PRE-DETERMINED, THE EU WOULD PROMISE TO TAKE CUBA'S VIEWS INTO CONSIDERATION BUT CERTAINLY RENEW THE POSITION. THE RENEWAL WOULD INFURIATE THE GOC, WHICH WOULD CLAIM THAT THE EU WAS TOO INFLUENCED BY THE UNITED STATES. THE GOC WOULD BE SIMILARLY IMPOTENT TO FORESTALL THE ANNUAL UN HUMAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE CONDEMNATION OF IT, ABOUT WHICH IT

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INFO LOG-00 NP-00 AMAD-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 DS-00 EUR-00
FBIE-00 VC-00 TEDE-00 INR-00 IO-00 LAB-01 VCE-00
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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6711
INFO EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE
HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION COLLECTIVE
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK
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WAS "WORRIED."

18. (C) THOUGH IT WAS "OUT OF CHARACTER," CUBA WOULD REQUEST MORE AID NOV. 4, GORETTI PREDICTED. RECENT TYPHOON DAMAGE HAD COMPOUNDED THE POST-9/11 DOWNTURN AND CREATED A "CRITICAL, VERY ALARMING SITUATION," WITH A THOUSAND FAMILIES HOMELESS AND MANY MORE STARVING. IN THIS DESPERATE CONTEXT,

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THE GOC HAD ASKED THE EC FOR HELP, PARTICULARLY FOOD AID.

19. (SBU) FINALLY, GORETTI NOTED, TWO HUNDRED AMERICAN BUSINESSMEN HAD RECENTLY VISITED CUBA TO SELL GOODS AT THE AMERICAN STAND AT A COMMERCIAL FAIR ATTENDED BY CASTRO. GORETTI CLAIMED THAT THE AMERICANS HAD GROSSED \$250M. HE NOTED THIS WITH SOME ENVY, BECAUSE ITALIAN BUSINESSMEN TEND NOT TO GET PAID FOR THEIR GOODS, WHICH THE GOC BUYS ON CREDIT. STILL, THE GOI WAS PLEASED WITH THE AMERICAN SALES, BECAUSE CUBANS "DESPERATELY NEED EVERYTHING."

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